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Students hone skills as artists to benefit the local community

Summary: Seventeen students in Michael Eble's Beginning and Advanced Painting I classes produced several landscape paintings for the Life Center at the Stevens Community Medical Center. There will be a public opening reception to unveil these new paintings from 4:30 to 6 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 11.

(November 24, 2008)-This fall, University of Minnesota, Morris art students are learning the positive impact that art can have on a community and environment, while honing their skills as artists and painters. Seventeen students in Michael Eble's Beginning and Advanced Painting I classes produced several landscape paintings for the Life Center at the Stevens Community Medical Center (SCMC).

There will be a public opening reception to unveil these new paintings from 4:30 to 6 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 11. Refreshments will be provided.

The purpose of this project was to teach students to create public art in collaboration with a community partner, while brightening the interior of the Life Center and encouraging visitors to ponder the beauty of the Minnesota landscape. Students also gained an appreciation of the positive effect they can have on a community through their art and a greater understanding of the Life Center and SCMC in Morris.

The students visited the Morris Wetland Management District this fall and painted a series of landscape paintings "en plein air." En plein air describes the traditional approach to painting outside in the environment of the painting. Through this process students acquired a greater appreciation for the Minnesota wetlands and landscape along with a better understanding of the environmental issues that affect such areas.

They also reflected on the impact their paintings will have on the Life Center space, which is part of a complete medical care facility treating the physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs of SCMC's patients and families. Finally, the finished paintings were hung in the Life Center space.

Student artists included in the exhibit are Evan Gragg, Jennifer Hagen, Angela Laidlaw, Michelle Leedahl, Eli Mayfield, Sarah McDermott, Mitch McGuire, Yang Mee Moua, Erica Ostoj, Zach Ranallo, Gretchen Retka, Cassandra Snyder, Jessica Thielen, Christine Toemke, James Watkins, and Samantha Vankrevelen.

This project was sponsored by the UMM Service Learning program. The Service Learning program supports faculty, students and community partners in creating community-based learning opportunities that meet community needs and student learning goals. About 25 service-learning courses are offered each year at UMM, involving more than 30 partnering agencies.

Photo: Student in Michael Eble's course paints in the environment of the Morris Wetland Management District.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.